

Commission News



An Update to the Commissioners of the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission

Full Commission Meeting - April 17, 2003

ANNUAL DINNER



Former Rhode Island Governor Lincoln Almond receives special recognition from Executive Director Creasey for his support of Blackstone Initiatives

The Heritage Corridor Commission held an exciting annual dinner celebrating the theme "Arts and Culture in the Blackstone Valley" at the Blackstone River Center in the heart of Pawtucket's Arts and Entertainment District. Over 280 persons attended the gala event and many thanks go to Barbara Dixon and the event committee. Also thanks are due to Mr. Louis Yip for providing the meeting space, with new windows!

The Commission thanked outgoing Chairman, Senator Richard T. Moore, Massachusetts State Senate for two years of service as Chairman and welcomed incoming Chairman Robert Billington. Special recognition was made to former Rhode Island Governor, Lincoln Almond for his long and continued support of the Heritage Corridor Commission and its many Blackstone River initiatives.

CHAFEE AWARDS

The Commission held their annual Chafee Heritage Award program at the Annual Dinner. The Chafee award honors the late Senator John H. Chafee, RI. and awards were given out to recipients throughout the Blackstone River Valley for their exceptional efforts and contributions.

Jennifer Cote of Woonsocket High School received an award for her work on development of environmental education activities

including a coloring book for the Blackstone Valley and her adoption of the Indian Rock Nature Trail.



Director Creasey, with Congressman Patrick Kennedy, Rhode Island honor Chafee Award recipients Deborah Cary, Jennifer Cote, Michael Quirk and Dick Gregory. Gary Vaillancourt another award winner is not pictured.

Michael Quirk, Upton, received an award for his work on conservation of the cemetery at the Chestnut Hill Meeting House in Millville.

Deborah Cary, director of Massachusetts Audubon Society's Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center and Wildlife Sanctuary in Worcester, received an award for her continued support of Commission programming in the Northern Gateway as well as her leadership on the Headwaters Coalition.

Gary Vaillancourt, Vaillancourt Folk Art, Sutton, received recognition for his work as chairman of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce's Tourism Committee.

Dick Gregory, Chairman of the Slater Mill Historic Site Board, has been instrumental in the revolution of interpretation at Slater Mill, where the museum is changing to a living history format. Many thanks go out to Sue Andrews for organizing and coordinating the awards process.

WASHINGTON UPDATE

Commission Goes To Capitol Hill

On February 26th the executive committee and staff (Bob Billington, Michael Cassidy, Donna Williams, Johanna Hunter and Michael Creasey) made their annual pilgrimage to Washington D.C.

to meet with the Blackstone Valley congressional delegation and brief them on our activities. They met directly with Congressman Neal and Senator Chafee and the staff of Congressman Kennedy, Langevin, McGovern and Senators Kennedy, Kerry and Reed. The Commission presented the FY 2004 Funding Request as well as asked for support for the continuation of the American Heritage Rivers Program and support for additional Development Fund authorization. Overall, it proved to be very positive and the delegation and their staff were very impressed with our continued progress.



Commissioners and staff meet with Congressman Neal

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Thank you to all of the commissioners that participated in the strategic planning processes as well as the task force meetings. After six months of planning, the Corridor Commission has not only a well-defined process to complete its present work program; it has also developed a very specific approach to organizing future efforts around experiences throughout the valley. The process allowed the Commission to strategically place investments and address capacity issues.

Much of the Development Program approved at the Annual Meeting for fiscal year 2003 was a direct result of this iterative process. It also provided the foundation of the 2003-04 legislative requests. The outcomes also gave the Commission a roadmap for the future as the Commission sunset in 2006 approaches.

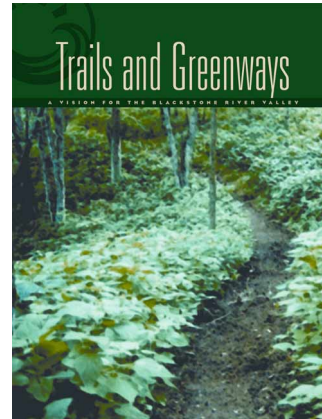
RIVERWAYS

Bikeway Update

The Blackstone River Bikeway continues to move forward, both in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Rhode Island is on schedule for a completion date of 2005. In Massachusetts, the Highway Department continues progressing with the assistance of the dedicated individuals who make up the MHD Blackstone River Bikeway Taskforce. Segment two, a three-mile section from Central Street in Millville to Rt. 122 in Uxbridge has reached the 25% design stage and is awaiting a public hearing. This hearing will be scheduled for sometime in the coming months. Progress is also being made within the Rt. 146/I-90 construction project as a section of bikeway is currently being constructed as part of the Rt. 20 contract. U.S. Congressmen Neal and McGovern recently submitted a request for \$21 million through the TEA-21 reauthorization which will be debated over for the next six months. If passed the new legislation would provide enough funding to

complete the Massachusetts portion of the Blackstone River Bikeway.

Trails and Greenways Report



The long-awaited Trails and Greenways report is out! The report was an outcome of the 2001 Call for Proposals request that identified the need for a more coordinated approach to greenway planning and trail development in the Blackstone River Valley. The report identifies trail connections between the Valley communities as well as to the Blackstone River Bikeway. It has been provided to the communities as a guide to

better coordinated trail development. A copy of the report is available at www.nps.gov/blac/what/current.htm or from the Commission offices. STAFF CONTACT: Mark Jewell.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The Red Shop in Hopedale

At the request of the Hopedale Historical Commission, Corridor Commission staff conducted a workshop to discuss the future of the Red Shop on Wednesday, December 4th at the Draper Place. Built in 1843, the Shop is the oldest building associated with the Draper plant operations in the community of Hopedale.

The workshop was designed to consider future uses for the Shop and to begin to identify goals for the operation and long term sustainability of the facility. Participants included local residents, town officials, and local historical groups. A workshop report will be provided to the community and outlining some next steps for the realization of a vision. STAFF CONTACT: Juliet Walker.

BLACKSTONE VALLEY INSTITUTE

Urban Environmental Design Manual Case Studies Selected

An advisory committee including RI DEM, U.S. EPA, Corridor Commission, and local planners met in January to select case study sites to be highlighted in the upcoming Urban Environmental Design Manual. The sites are Stillwater Mill Complex in Burrillville, Dytex and DPW properties in Central Falls, Tidewater site in Pawtucket, and Rau Fastener in Providence. The manual will provide guidelines that address a variety of environmental issues related to residential, commercial and industrial development in densely inhabited areas. STAFF CONTACT: Juliet Walker.

Leadership Blackstone Valley

Leadership Blackstone Valley, a partnership between the Blackstone Valley Chamber and the Corridor Commission, continues to draw new leaders from across the Blackstone Valley. The Winter/Spring 2003 class includes 15 participants. The first session was held on January 30th and included some team building exercises including the building of a newspaper bridge and the commencement are scheduled for May 15th.



Two of the highlights for this class have been the sessions held at the Jenckes Store Museum in Douglas and the session on the creation of the National Heritage Corridor featuring Louise Redding, Wil Gates, John Marsland, Margaret Carroll and Michael Creasey. At left, participants construct a newspaper bridge as part of a team building exercise in the opening session. The class is showing their

'can do' attitude by signing up to participate in the river clean up on Earth Day, April 26th. For more information on LBV please contact Beckley Alley for information (508) 234-9090. STAFF CONTACTS: Juliet Walker and Hal Welch.

EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

Rangers are out and about interpreting the Valley

As the weather warms up, school field trips are just around the corner and the Heritage Corridor's Interpretive Rangers and VIPs have been offering programs throughout the winter months. From the new fly tying program, to classroom visits and talks to local clubs about 2,000 people have attended over 40 programs since January 1, 2003.

One particularly successful program is the Ranger Day's lecture series at the Museum of Work and Culture, a partnership now in its sixth year. Some highlights for this year's series include an oral history program celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Blizzard of 1978, and a talk by R.I. Chief Justice Frank Williams, a noted expert on Abraham Lincoln, discussing President Lincoln's visit to Woonsocket during the 1860 Presidential campaign.

PADDLE CLUB in Training

The Paddle Club is gearing up for the summer of 2003. The Ranger and volunteer Team Leaders, who did so much to make the program a success last summer, are preparing for May 13th, when the Club begins for 2003. CPR, river rescue, trip logistics are all topics for the sessions they are attending. Mark your calendars! This summer, the Club will meet twice weekly, on Tuesday AND Wednesday evenings through August 20th. STAFF CONTACT: Sue Andrews.

Blackstone Valley Education Network

The organizations of the BV Education Network are striving to assure that their resources and programs connect appropriately with curriculum in both MA and RI. Educators attending the New England Regional Council for the Social Studies Conference in Boston and the New England League of Middle Schools conference in Providence this spring were among the recipients of a draft edition of "Connections to the Frameworks" brochure.

This publication will provide guidance to teachers about how programs tie into the curriculum. Also, to help organizations in the Network align their programs with curriculum frameworks, two workshops are being held with MA and RI Dept. of Education to overview the individual states' curriculum content. STAFF CONTACT: Sue Andrews.

Great Student Turn-Out and Enthusiasm at Clean Water Festival

The heavy snows of March didn't dampen the enthusiasm and creativity of the 55 students from nine high-schools throughout the entire Valley who participated in the 2003 Clean Water Festival. The event, held on March 6th at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket, represented the culmination of this year's Blackstone River Watershed Education project. Students spent the day participating in activities including the Parade of Waters, presentation of their storm-water testing results on the large-scale floor map, and an intriguing decision-making activity based on real-life, environmental dilemmas. Various partners, including Mike Ferry of the Blackstone Valley Rivers Project, Donna Williams of Mass. Audubon, Tammy Gilpatrick of the Blackstone River Watershed Council as well as the Corridor Commission worked together to make the Clean Water Festival a reality. STAFF CONTACT: Sue

Andrews.



Volunteer In Parks (VIP) Program "How sweet it is"

The past several weeks have been very busy for a dedicated group of VIP's, led by VIP's Bill & Valerie Paul. Bill and Valerie ran a Maple Sugaring program partnering

with MADEM at River Bend Farm that attracted an incredible attendance of 1,100 participants over six days. Many thanks go out to the dedicated VIPs who gave of their time to this outstanding educational program. Volunteering has never been sweeter!

Big Night 2003 is Coming...

As the temperature rises and the ground begins to thaw, spring and BIG NIGHT 2003 are just around the corner. The first warm, rainy night of spring will spark the annual migration of spotted salamanders and wood frogs

back to their natal vernal pools to breed. Adults and children, donning safety vests and using flashlights, will assist these amphibians as they cross treacherous roads during their journey. This year's BIG NIGHT, which is



again being coordinated by the Corridor Commission and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, will take place at six sites in Massachusetts and seven in Rhode Island. Those sites and more information about BIG NIGHT can be found on our new and improved website, www.bignight.org. STAFF CONTACT: Karen Mateleska.

Fly Fishing Club



A six week fly tying class was recently held at the First United Methodist Church in Woonsocket jointly sponsored by the Corridor Commission and the United FlyTyers of Rhode Island, who were immediately enlisted into the VIP program. At left, VIP instructor Joe Kiselica assists Zacharey Demers with the youth tying techniques.

Over forty fly tyers of all ages attended each session and worked on developing the skills necessary for spring

angling classes on the Blackstone. For reservations or information for the spring angling session please contact the Commission staff. STAFF CONTACT: Suzanne Buchanan.

Rangers Jump Start Capacity Building with Partners

Rangers Chuck Arning and Kevin Klyberg, with the assistance and sponsorship of the Worcester Historical Museum, developed a workshop for historical societies and their many volunteers to strengthen their research skills. The workshop, "Researching Your Community: Research Tools for the Volunteer Historian", was held on Saturday, January 25 at the Worcester Historical Museum. Historical Societies from Uxbridge, Upton, Leicester, Douglas and Hopedale joined members of Waters Farm Preservation and the Boston Office of the National Parks and Conservation Association to learn research techniques and new ways of improving their collections. The group also explored new ways to share information between historical societies within the Valley. STAFF CONTACT: Chuck Arning.

New Episode of "Along the Blackstone" Airing Throughout the Valley

Rangers sitting around a roaring camp fire swapping stories? It's a natural for interesting television. Episode #56 of Along the Blackstone, "Favorite Ranger Tales," captured those stories that the Rangers always found interesting. From Elephants to the Bahamas to trying to locate where Reverend William Blackstone really is buried, these stories of whimsy and tragedy provide a new window into the past. Along the Blackstone is currently airing throughout the Valley, check your local listings for the time and dates in your community.

Other upcoming episodes to watch for includes: the Woman's Rights Movement here in the Blackstone Valley and Exploring/Uncovering the hidden Blackstone Canal. STAFF CONTACT: Chuck Arning.

STAFF NOTES

Recently several staff members were honored with awards from the Corridor Commission. Nancy Brittain has done exceptional research and work on the compliance reviews of the proposed L. B. Railco project in Millbury, Massachusetts. Many thanks are also due to Diane Wendland who single-handedly took on the

revamping of the Heritage Corridor's web site. The Corridor Commission also gives high accolades to Barbara Dixon for her work on the Annual Dinner. Hat's off to a great crew!

CALENDAR OF COMMISSION ACTIVITIES

April 17 Commission Meeting - Asa Waters Mansion Millbury, MA 7:00 pm. Contact Linda McWhorter for more Information.

May 3 Paddle Club River Cleanup Day - 8:00 am at RiverBend Farm. Contact Chuck Arning.

May 15 Leadership Blackstone Valley Commencement

May 16 Waters Farm House Conservation and Master Plan Partner Appreciation Day - Waters Farm 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Lunch Served. Contact Barbara Dixon for more information.

May 17 Riverfest - River Island Park, Woonsocket from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Contact Suzanne Buchanan for more information.

June 5 Tourism Summit by Corridor Commission, BVTC, BVCC Location TBD. Contact Barbara Dixon for more information.

June 7 CanalFest – 175th Anniversary of the Canal, River Bend Farm.

June 21 ZAP the Blackstone Day - BRWC, Kelley Island, Cumberland, RI. 5:30 am to 5:00 pm. Contact Karen Mateleska for more information.

June 21 Valley Tour – Alternatives, Inc. and Corridor Commission, Contact Barbara Dixon for details.

August 17 Annual VIP Outing - VIP's Spring Lake Beach, Burrillville, RI, TBA. Contact Suzanne Buchanan for details.

September 27 Greenway Challenge - Corridor Coalition, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contact Barbara Dixon for more information.

October 1 - 12 Blackstone Canal 175th Anniversary - Corridor Commission and Worcester Historical Museum, TBA. Contact Chuck Arning for details.

FROM THE ROGER WILLIAMS NATIONAL MEMORIAL

Roger Williams 400th Birthday Anniversary 1603-2003

The year 2003 marks the 400th anniversary of the birth of Roger Williams. Commemoration of this anniversary year affords a unique opportunity to discuss and debate the issues and ideals of Rhode Island's founder and the ongoing struggle for human rights everywhere. Throughout the year, a variety of events will commemorate Williams' contributions.

On Saturday May 10th and Sunday May 11th, Bridge to the Past, a Key into the World of Roger Williams is a weekend of living history sponsored by Roger Williams National Memorial to bring what was everyday for Rhode Islanders in the 1600's to life for Rhode Islanders today.

